



## Chicago

### Location: the Key to Future Growth

#### Glossary

**agriculture** - anything to do with farming

**agribusiness** - the businesses related to farming such manufacturing farm implements

**portage** - a route for carrying boats or goods overland from one body of water to another

**crossroads** - a point at which roads, trails, rail lines etc. meet

**canal** - a manmade waterway

Chicago played a huge role in the growth and development of **agriculture** and **agribusiness** in Illinois and the rest of the country. This world-class city began as a **portage** between Lake Michigan and the Illinois River. The Native Americans used the site long before the Europeans arrived. The French explorer, Louis Jolliet, one of the first Europeans to travel in Illinois, saw that this location was a **crossroads**. He realized that building a **canal** at this point could connect the distant Atlantic Ocean, through a system of lakes, rivers, and canals, to the Gulf of Mexico. His dream would one day become true.



Chicago in 1820. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

Linking the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River was a large part of the growth of Chicago and all of northern Illinois.

**transportation hub** - a center for moving goods or people

**Yankee** - a nickname for people from the northeastern part of the United States, especially those from the New England states

This was especially important during the early 1800s when traveling by boat was the fastest, easiest, and safest way to move west. After the Civil War, railroads made Chicago the Midwest's biggest city and a **transportation hub** for the whole country.

The first European settler at the site of Chicago was the son of a French sea captain and an ex-slave. Jean Baptiste Point du Sable lived there, off and on, until 1800. He farmed and traded with the various Indians who came to trade furs. In 1803 the United States government built Fort Dearborn on the location to protect new settlers arriving from the eastern states. Fur trading remained the main business in Chicago until the late 1820s. By then the fur trappers had killed so many animals in the Midwest that they had to move farther west to find enough game. New businesses in Chicago were created when the Erie Canal opened in 1825.

## Food for People in the Cities

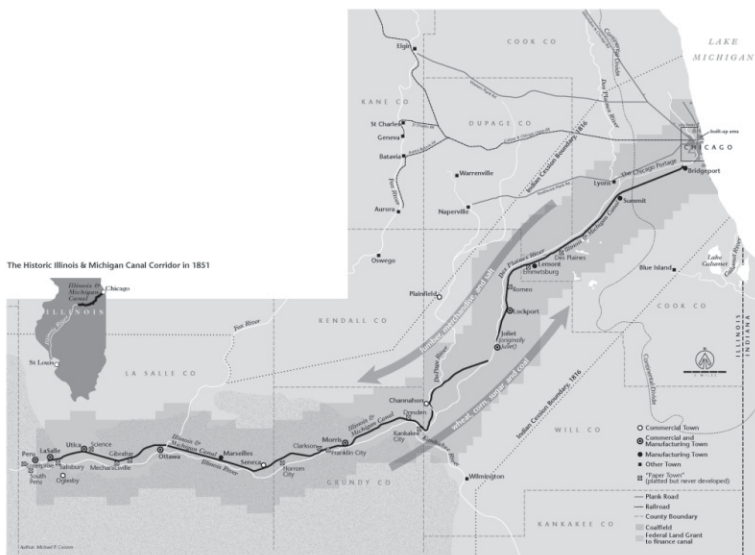
The world's population began to increase rapidly around 1750. Large cities needed food and transportation systems to move that food from where it was produced to where it was needed. When the problem of food supply and transportation was solved, cities grew even larger. Chicago's growth began just as this problem was being solved in the United States. Its location, between the farms and ranches of the western states and the cities of the east coast, was perfect for receiving and shipping farm products and exchanging them for manufactured

goods. Chicago's central location, next to Lake Michigan, near major rivers and canals, meant goods and products could be shipped all over the nation. These important factors caused Chicago to grow quickly into the second largest city in the United States by 1889.

## Transportation Develops

Many **Yankees** moved from the northeastern states to the Midwest by traveling on the Erie Canal and

Map of Chicago showing movement of goods to and from the city on the I & M Canal. Courtesy Newberry Library.



**treaty** - an agreement between two groups or countries

**speculator** - someone who buys and sells for a quick profit

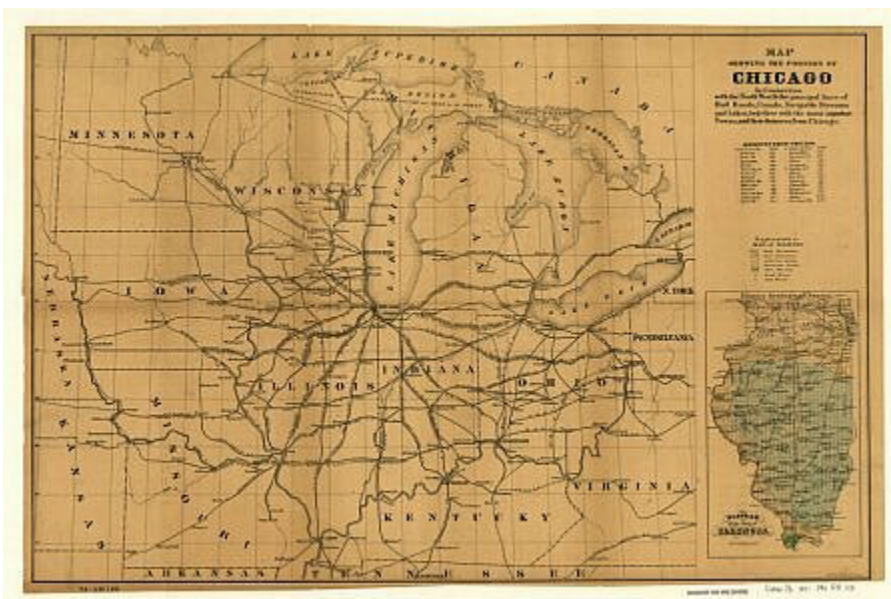
the Great Lakes. For a long time, Chicago was the westernmost port for passengers and goods. Northern Illinois had good farmland for the new arrivals. A problem did exist with the Indians who naturally, did not want people taking their lands. A **treaty** was offered to the Potawatomi, Chippewa, and Ottawa nations to give up their territory in northern Illinois and move across the Mississippi River into Iowa. The tribes accepted and were granted land by the federal government. The Native Americans later felt cheated. Fighting between Indians and settlers took many lives on both sides. After the Indians were forced out, the settlers poured into northern Illinois and Chicago.

In 1836, the Illinois legislature approved a plan to build the Illinois & Michigan Canal to connect Chicago by way of Lake Michigan to the Illinois River and on to the Gulf of Mexico. The Illinois & Michigan Canal had an immediate impact on Chicago's growth. More people saw that the city could be a major transportation hub. They came to Chicago to buy and sell land. These businessmen were called

land or real estate **speculators**. Twelve years later, in 1848, the Illinois & Michigan Canal was finally finished. That same year, the first railroad line opened in Chicago and the telegraph lines reached the city, too.

By 1856, Chicago was the end of the line for ten different railroads. Tracks connected Chicago to the wheat fields of the western states and the big cities of the east coast. Detroit, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New Orleans, Kansas City, and St. Paul were all directly connected to Chicago by railroads. Trains leaving Chicago carried manufactured goods to the **rural** areas and returned loaded with grain and livestock to feed the rest of America.

**rural** - having to do with the country; not in a city



Map of railroads entering Chicago. Courtesy Illinois State Museum.



**elevator** - a place to store grain

**livestock** - domesticated animals such as cattle and pigs

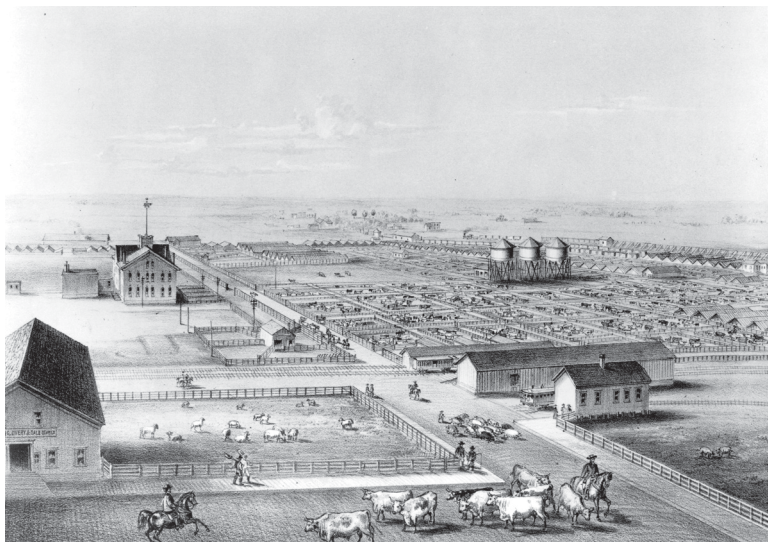
**meat packing** - the business of killing animals and preparing the meat for sale

## Agriculture and Immigration

Grain **elevators** lined the Chicago River. They were full of corn and wheat, ready to be sent to cities all across the United States. Shipping **livestock** was also a major industry in Chicago. **Meat packing** plants were located in many different Chicago neighborhoods. This caused problems when animals were herded through the streets. People had to dodge animals and the smell from pigs and cows was awful for people living near the plants. City officials decided to create a **business district** with one large stockyard to receive livestock, a place for meat processing plants, and rail lines to ship the animals in and the meat out. The Union Stockyard opened for business on the south side of Chicago in 1865. Businesses also located in this area in order to manufacture products the farmers needed. This saved time and money because it was cheaper and faster than shipping

the same items from the east coast manufacturing plants. The shipping distance for the farmers in the West and the Midwest was cut in half. The McCormick Company made Chicago the base for its operations. Cyrus McCormick had invented a **reaper** that saved the farmer's time harvesting their crops.

With the growth of industry, came a need for workers to fill the many new jobs. Many people from the eastern states moved west searching for a chance for a better



Sketch of Chicago stockyards. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

**business district** - a part of a city where businesses locate; not an area where people have their homes

life. In addition, many people were coming to the United States from Europe. Chicago became home for thousands of them. The Irish were among the first wave of **immigrants** to settle in Chicago during the 1840s. Germans came next, followed by British, Scandinavians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Serbs, Croats, and Greeks. Many Chinese arrived from Asia. Half the people in Chicago were born in a foreign country. By 1890, more than three-fourths of the people living in Chicago, or their parents, were born outside the United States. ( Polish Kids Playing in the street

*reaper* - a machine for cutting grain such as wheat or barley

*immigrant* - a person who moves into a new country

*census* - an official counting of people

Chicago was growing very fast. In 1837, only 4,000 people lived there. Only twenty-three years later, when the 1860 *census* was taken, it had a population of over 100,000. Even after the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, and the bad times that followed, Chicago's population jumped to over 500,000 by 1880. Within the next ten years the population doubled to over one million, so that by 1890, it was the second largest city in the United States. Chicago continued to grow for the next sixty years. It reached its peak in 1950 with a population of over three and a half million. By the 2000 census, Chicago's population slipped to less than three million.



The Rush of Lives Over the Randolph Street Bridge. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

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